

# THE MASTER MIND

Novelized by Marvin Dana  
Author of "Within the Law"  
From the Successful Play  
by Daniel D. Carter

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## SYNOPSIS.

Henry Allen, a young married man, is accused of being the man who killed the man who won the affections of Allen's wife. Allen's brother, Andrew, known to the criminal world as "The Master Mind," determines to avenge his brother. He writes the district attorney that he will send him white, red and black blank cards indicating the progress of his plans for revenge.

Andrew discovers that the district attorney who convicted Henry is in love with an orphan girl who once saved his life. The district attorney, Wainwright, has been searching for this girl, but cannot find her.

Andrew finds the girl and after conspiring to send her to prison gets her released. He then educates her.

The Master Mind, Andrew, then provides a family for the girl, the girl, Lucene. The members of the "family" are ex-crooks living under assumed names. Lucene, however, does not know of their past. Andrew takes the position of butler in the house.

Lucene's three associates represent themselves as her father, mother and brother. They take the name of Blount under Andrew's command. Finally, Wainwright, to Lucene, they quarrel among themselves.

Wainwright, the district attorney, is lured to the Blount establishment by Andrew and his associates. Wainwright has been lured up as a leading candidate for governor of New York state. Andrew plots his ruin.

Lucene meets Wainwright. It is a case of love at first sight. Each remembers the occasion when the girl saved his life by finding a cigarette around a wrist injured in an automobile accident. They marry.

Creagan, a notorious western thief, is summoned east by Andrew for a mysterious purpose. Creagan talks with Wainwright, who is a criminal posing as Lucene's brother.

(Continued from Last Week)

"It may be," he said gently, "that this supreme sacrifice will not be necessary. But if it should be—well, here is the money."

Again he held forth the sheaf of bills, and now the girl put out a languid hand, took them, and hid them in her bosom, her face masquerade-like in its misery. "As nearly as I have been able to learn," Andrew continued, in a brisker voice, "Creagan will make his attempt here about 2 o'clock tomorrow morning. Of course, he will come directly to this room, as he has doubtless acquainted himself with the general plan of the house and knows that the safe is in this alcove. You will meet him here when he comes."

"Yes," The word was spoken in a lifeless tone.

Nothing mattered now. She went from the room slowly, with dragging steps.

For a long time after Lucene was gone from the library Andrew stood as she had left him, with moody eyes staring unseeing into space, and the intensity of his emotion was shown in the harsh grimace of his face.

But at last that expression vanished in an instant. In place of it there was revealed a malignant exultation, a triumphant smile. The black hate of him glowed from his face, burned cruelly from his eyes. He hurried stealthily to the large table where was lying a book he had seen Wainwright reading often, a book of love poems.

The Master Mind took from an inner pocket a card of pasteboard, blank, which he placed between the leaves of the book, in such fashion that it protruded noticeably, and so left it lying there. For a long minute he stood looking down in sinister gloating; then, with a sardonic chuckle, he turned and went out.

The card was blank.

Marshall, the Pinkerton detective engaged by Wainwright to ferret out the mystery of the cards by tracing them to their source, had wholly failed in accomplishing anything whatever in that direction.

Tonight he had come to the mansion under the guise of a participant in Wainwright's campaign work, as he had done frequently hitherto, in order yet once again to review with his principal the facts of the case in a final desperate hope of changing on some neglected item that might suffice as a clue to definite information.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Wainwright demanded in his library.

The detective's face, too, indicated a like depression of spirit.

"Might as well be frank," he said reluctantly. "I must confess, Mr. Wainwright, that this thing has got me stumped."

"Can't we get any help from the post-office inspectors?" Wainwright suggested.

"They've been doing what they could," Marshall replied, "but they haven't got anything yet."

"It's been two months now since the coming of the red card," Wainwright mused.

"The longer the better," the detective exclaimed energetically. "It's beginning to look to me as if the chap's nerve might be petering—as if you'd never get that black card, the one to mean real business. Take it from me, Mr. Wainwright, it's just one of those cranks that are always annoying public men. Why, it stands to reason when you come to think of it. You see, the sender of those mysterious cards claimed to be Henry Allen's brother. Well, now, that fits in with my theory, because nobody ever heard of Henry Allen's brother at any other time. If there really had been such a brother he would have appeared to aid Henry at the time of the trial."

Wainwright was not in the least convinced. He remembered the fact that the unknown enemy had in fact used every endeavor in Henry Allen's behalf before the trial and throughout his course.

"And as I remember you got the warning red card the next day after your nomination for governor."

"Perhaps there's nothing significant in that fact," the detective admitted. "But I want to verify my memory. Now there's one other thing I must speak of," Marshall hesitated, with evident embarrassment. "It's a delicate point to touch on with a man," he explained, "but I've got to do it."

Wainwright nodded consent.

"It's about your wife," the detective declared constrainedly. "She's worried about something."

For a moment stern displeasure flashed from Wainwright's clear gray eyes; then the expression died as he smiled.

"Ah, you've noticed that," he exclaimed. "A troubled frown bent his brows. 'Yes,' he said dully, at last. 'It would seem so, perhaps. I, too, have noticed something—'

"Have you ever told her about the cards?" Marshall inquired.

"I did not wish to worry her," Wainwright replied.

"Have you questioned her?"

"Yes, I shall not tell you precisely what answer she made. It would have no bearing. It is enough for you to know that it was merely a pretty little sentimental reason—one that seemed natural enough too."

"Well, we still seem to have nothing definite to go on," the detective grumbled. "Anyhow, I'm much inclined to believe the thing is actually done with."

Wainwright moved uneasily in his chair and dropped one hand carelessly on the table beside which he sat. His fingers touched the book of poems from which he had been reading recently. He picked up the volume hilly. "Then, you really think," he continued listlessly, "that the gentleman who sends the cards is just a harmless crank?"

"Yes," Marshall said confidently. "I think that's really just about the size of this enemy of yours. It's been somebody masquerading as the Master Mind. The chap will never go any further." Wainwright listened courteously, but the detective's words carried no conviction to him. He was reflecting on the fact that an ordinary harmless lunatic would be little likely to display the ingenuity and the resource and the pertinacity that had characterized his enemy in the matter of following him everywhere with the cryptic cards. The timing of the sending of the cards, one to reach him at the time of his triumph of love, another at the time of his triumph of ambition, was enough to proclaim the diabolical cunning of his foe and to augur ill of his abilities for the future.

At the thought of the red card Wainwright moved nervously. The fingers that gripped the book closed tightly on it. In the movement their tips touched something that projected beyond the leaves. Mechanically, without any curiosity whatsoever, he glanced down. Then, very slowly, he stiffened in his chair, staring fixedly toward the volume. His face lost its clear coloring and swiftly showed a dull pallor and set in new lines—lines of dread.

"Why," Marshall continued, "I once knew a very similar case, in which—"

He halted his speech abruptly, for he had chanced to look up at the map opposite him and was astounded. "Good God!" he cried. "What's the matter, man?"

Wainwright made no answer in words; only raised the book and drew forth from between the leaves a blank black card and rested motionless, holding it stiffly in front of him.

## CHAPTER XII.

### The Unmasking.

THE detective and Wainwright now sat rigid and staring in a silent wonder, touched with an almost superstitious fear. For long minutes there was not a word between them, nor any movement.

It was Wainwright who at last broke the initiative. Of a sudden he aroused himself to cast the torpor of dread from his spirit. He was a brave man, and he had only contempt for the weakness into which he had been surprised by this uncanny trick in the presentation of the black card. Here finally was a new point for concentration. He felt a curious sense of relief as the thought occurred to him, and forthwith his keen mind began to concern itself with the facts in the event and to reason from them.

He relaxed his posture and looked up at the detective sharply. His voice was crisp.

"Marshall," he said rapidly, "just before dinner I had this very book in my hands, reading from it a certain quotation. The black card was not there then." He laid the card within the volume. "See," he continued. "It is longer than the leaves. It must project beyond them. Had it been in the book I must have seen it."

The detective nodded agreement.

"So, then, my enemy has been here in this house, my own home—tonight. And this card means that the end is at hand. Yes, and the man himself is here to fulfill his promise to me. In my own home—tonight!"

"But how? What do you expect?"

"If I knew that I might plan to prevent him," Wainwright answered shortly. "In whatever thing his evil mind has plotted. But I am half convinced of one thing—that he does not mean to kill me outright. Murder has never been committed by him as far as any one knows."

"Just the same," Marshall suggested. "It's well to be prepared." He took an automatic pistol from his pocket and held it out.

"Very well." The pistol was accepted and bestowed in a pocket just as the butler entered the library.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"No," was the concise answer.

"Pardon me, sir," Andrew said. "I thought I heard the bell, and, as I knew Parker was long upstairs, I—"

"Quite so," Yes, I see," Andrew. Then he introduced the vital subject: "Has anybody been in this room tonight except the members of the family?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, which Wainwright had by no means expected. "A person called to see Mr. Walter, though I did not see him myself."

"Then Walter Blount saw him?"

"No, sir," Andrew explained, "he did not."

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"And no one else has been here except members of the family?"

"No, sir, no one—except myself."

The very fact that in the final phrase the butler had omitted the customary "sir" caught Wainwright's attention. It was suspicion that suggested his next question:

"Was the person who called left alone in this room?"

Andrew met the issue with the enormous audacity that was characteristic of him—when it did not run counter to his scheming. Now, according to his plans, the hour for unmasking was come. He spoke tranquilly:

"No, sir. He was not alone in this room at any time. I am quite sure, sir." He paused to give emphasis to his question. "Why, sir? Has anything been taken?"

"No," Wainwright replied carelessly, "nothing has been taken."

But Andrew was not yet content with the situation. He was, in fact, minded to implicate himself more explicitly, though not by a distinctly overt act. He selected as his agent in this the detective, who had been scrutinizing the butler with professional closeness.

"May I venture an observation, sir?" Andrew asked his employer. Then, as Wainwright nodded assent, "It's only this, sir, that the next time Mr. Marshall sees me he will be sure to know me." With the saying he went softly out of the room, while the detective sat staring, agape with indignant surprise at the impertinence.

Wainwright spoke in a low tone, yet most emphatically:

"Marshall," he said, "the next time your brother officers boast of their acquaintance with prominent men you may say that, face to face, you have met the Master Mind."

Marshall said not a word, only regarded the speaker with amazement. He threw a quick glance toward the doorway through which Andrew had disappeared.

"You don't mean—him?" he exclaimed.

"Precisely."

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"It's the chance of my life!" he exclaimed gleefully.

"What do you intend to do?"

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"Permit me to ask, on what charge?"

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"On what charge?" he quoted helplessly. "Why— He halted, at a loss. "Yes; on what charge?" Wainwright snapped. "Oh, come, man! he's exhorting. 'Just sit down and think it over a bit. As a matter of fact, we're helping against this fellow. If you have anything else to suggest—'

The detective threw up his hands in a gesture eloquent of despair. His voice was angry:

"I don't know."

Wainwright walked slowly up the stairs and along the upper hall to the door of his wife's boudoir, where he knocked gently. He entered in response to her call. "Come in," and to her where she was standing expectant and took her hands. She was dressed in a blue negligee that emphasized the purity of her pearly skin and enhanced the sapphire radiance of the eyes. Now she looked at her husband intently as he approached her, and it seemed to him that a faint trace of anxiety lay beneath her surface greeting. He had need to put forth the full strength of his will to conceal the wretchedness of his thoughts.

"I'm sorry if I disturb you, dear," he regarded her searchingly. "You are looking a little fagged."

"I have a right to be tired," Lucene answered brightly. "For I've been helping—mother with her packing."

"Now, what does that mean?" the husband inquired, surprised. "Are your estimable parents planning to leave us?"

"Yes," the wife replied. "I didn't know that you hadn't heard the news."

Wainwright's lips tightened. To him, mindful of the symbolism of the black card, this swiftly arranged partial breaking up of his household appeared as a confirmation of the worst fears.

"And Andrew?"

"Oh, yes; he goes with them, of course, since he was really only loaned to us."

Then he added, curiously: "It's all a bit sudden, isn't it?"

"Yes," Lucene said contentedly. "It all came up and was decided—like that." She snapped her fingers airily.

He spoke very gravely:

"Lucene, I came to you to say something of a certain important matter."

The wife drew her hands from his, and moved a little away from him, dejectedly.

"Please, Corlind," she pleaded, "can't you wait until tomorrow? I am so tired."

"Lucene," he said very seriously, "I have an enemy—one in particular, I mean, a man who is powerful."

"An enemy—you?" she cried, incredulously. To her, who worshipped him, the bare idea seemed preposterous, absurd, impossible.

"Yes, an enemy," Wainwright repeated, with added energy. "Didn't you know it?"

"No, I never guessed anything of this," she said, now thoroughly frightened at the thought of peril for him. "How should I know anything of it? You never told me!"

Wainwright answered frankly.

"I have told you already, Lucene, that I sometimes feared lest you had some anxiety you kept secret from me. You explained the cause of your distress to me. Yet I thought there was a remote possibility that you might be able to tell me something more."

The wife watched her husband as he thus spoke with an astonishment into which blended reproach.

"What is it you wish to know?" she said, with a trace of bitterness in her tone. "I know nothing of any enemy, but I am ready to tell you whatever I do know."

Wainwright shook his head.

"Since you know nothing of my enemy," he said, "it would be vain to bother you with questions. You cannot help me." He turned and went toward the door, but halted as his wife

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